

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. A system for rendering content according to availability data for at least one item, comprising:
 - a server operable to receive a content request from a user and, in response, to retrieve the requested content;
 - a rendering engine coupled to the server and operable to identify at least one rule within the content and concerning the item; and
 - a rules engine coupled to the rendering engine and operable to:
 - generate at least one availability request corresponding to the rule and concerning the item;
 - receive availability data for the item;
 - retrieve additional content according to the availability data for the item, the additional content being selected from among one or more stored content elements that concern the item; and
 - communicate the additional content concerning the item to the rendering engine for incorporation in the requested content;
 - the rendering engine further operable to render the requested content, including the additional content concerning the item;
 - the server further operable to communicate the rendered content to the user to satisfy the content request.
 2. The system of Claim 1, wherein the server comprises a web server and the content request comprises a Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) request containing a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) for a particular web page.
 3. The system of Claim 1, wherein:
 - the requested content is a particular web page comprising a container that contains the rule; and
 - the additional content concerning the item is incorporated into the web page to replace the container.

4. The system of Claim 1, wherein the rule comprises one or more conditions concerning the item, the rules engine applying the conditions to the availability data to determine the content element concerning the item to retrieve.

5 5. The system of Claim 1, wherein the rule comprises a function call.

6. The system of Claim 1, wherein the availability data is selected from the group consisting of:

10 inventory information concerning the item;
delivery information concerning the item; and
pricing information concerning the item.

15 7. The system of Claim 1, wherein the availability data comprises dynamic pricing information for the item obtained from multiple suppliers of the item, the content server 14 operable to render content concerning the item that reflects the least of these prices in accordance with a promising policy.

20 8. The system of Claim 1, further comprising an availability server operable to receive the availability request from the rules engine, obtain the availability data from one or more suppliers, and communicate the availability data to the rules engine.

25 9. The system of Claim 1, wherein the availability server is further operable to generate a notification in response to a change in availability data for an item, the content server operable to select alternative additional content concerning the item in response to the notification.

30 10. The system of Claim 1, wherein the availability server is further operable to generate a notification in response to a change in the availability data for an item to allow personnel associated with the content server to adjust a policy with respect to the item.

11. The system of Claim 1, wherein the item comprises multiple components and the availability data comprises availability data for one or more components of the item.

5 12. The system of Claim 1, wherein additional content concerning the item comprises information selected from the group consisting of:

- an advertisement;
- a promotion; and
- an item recommendation.

10 13. The system of Claim 1, wherein additional content concerning the item comprises one or more item recommendations, the content server operable to determine the most desirable item recommendation according to one or more sorting criteria and to render the additional content according to that determination.

15 14. The system of Claim 13, wherein the sorting criteria are selected from the group consisting of:

- availability for the item to which the recommendation is directed;
- profitability for the item to which the recommendation is directed;
- one or more other performance indicators associated with the item that a seller wishes to optimize; and
- a characteristic of a user to which the recommendation is to be presented.

15. A method of rendering content according to availability data for at least one item, comprising:

receiving a content request from a user;

retrieving the requested content in response to the content request;

5 identifying at least one rule within the content and concerning the item;

generating at least one availability request that corresponds to the rule and that concerns the item;

receiving availability data for the item;

10 retrieving additional content according to the availability data for the item, the additional content being selected from among one or more stored content elements that concern the item;

incorporating the additional content into the requested content;

rendering the requested content, including the additional content concerning the item; and

15 communicating the rendered content to the user to satisfy the content request.

16. The method of Claim 15, wherein the content request received from the user comprises a Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) request containing a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) for a particular web page.

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17. The method of Claim 15, wherein:

the requested content is a particular web page comprising a container that contains the rule; and

25 the additional content concerning the item is incorporated into the web page to replace the container.

18. The method of Claim 15, wherein:

the rule comprises one or more conditions concerning the item; and

30 the method further comprises applying the conditions to the availability data to determine which content concerning the item to retrieve.

19. The method of Claim 15, wherein the rule comprises a function call.

an advertisement;
a promotion; and
an item recommendation.

5 27. The method of Claim 15, wherein the additional content concerning the item comprises one or more item recommendations and the method further comprises determining the most desirable item recommendation according to one or more sorting criteria, the additional content being rendered according to that determination.

10 28. The method of Claim 15, wherein the sorting criteria are selected from the group consisting of:

availability for the item to which the recommendation is directed;
profitability for the item to which the recommendation is directed;
one or more other performance indicators associated with the item that a seller
15 wishes to optimize; and
a characteristic of a user to which the recommendation is to be presented.

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- 5 29. Software for rendering content according to availability data for at least one item, the software being embodied in a computer-readable medium and operable to:
- receive a content request from a user;
 - retrieve the requested content in response to the content request;
 - identify at least one rule within the content and concerning the item;
 - generate at least one availability request that corresponds to the rule and that concerns the item;
 - receive availability data for the item;
 - retrieve additional content according to the availability data for the item, where the additional content is selected from among one or more stored content elements that concern the item;
 - incorporate the additional content concerning the item into the requested content;
 - render the requested content, including the additional content concerning the item;
- 10 and
- 15 communicate the rendered content to the user to satisfy the content request.

30. A system for rendering content according to availability data for at least one item, comprising:

means for receiving a content request from a user and for retrieving the requested content in response to the content request;

means for identifying at least one rule within the content and concerning the item;

means for generating at least one availability request that corresponds to the rule and that concerns the item, receiving availability data for the item, retrieving additional content according to the availability data for the item, where the additional content is selected from among one or more stored content elements that concern the item, and incorporating the additional content concerning the item into the requested content;

10 incorporating the additional content/concerning the item into the requested content;

the means for identifying the rule comprising means for rendering the requested content, including the additional content concerning the item; and

the means for receiving the content request comprising means for communicating the rendered content to the user to satisfy the content request.

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